

Mexican Wolf Plan Principles and Requirements

THE AGFC WOLF CONSERVATION PLAN PRICIPLES FOR ARIZONA

*This represents a living document that is subject to ongoing review and update by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission

PRINCIPLES (values): The Department will manage Mexican wolves under the Commission's guidance, on non-tribal lands in Arizona pursuant to the state's authority to manage all wildlife within the state of Arizona, and in a manner that is consistent with and reflects the following principles:

- The Department's ongoing management of all wildlife, including Mexican wolf, will continue to be consistent with the North American Model of wildlife conservation.
- The Department will use appropriate public, government-to-government and stakeholder engagement processes to inform Mexican Wolf management in Arizona.
- The Department will pursue the development of appropriate partnerships with Native American Tribes in Arizona in developing and implementing any wolf conservation plan.
- The return of the Mexican wolf to its historic range in Arizona will be implemented within approved levels of funding and human resource capacity, which will be supported with appropriate financial support from both federal and private sources.
- Mexican wolf restoration in Arizona will only occur within manageable areas of the state's Mexican wolf historic range that provide suitable and acceptable habitat..
- An Arizona wolf conservation plan will ultimately identify specific numbers of Mexican wolves and geographic ranges within Arizona to drive ongoing management efforts. Those objectives must reflect acceptable occupation by wolves at populations that are biologically, socially, economically, and financially sustainable on Arizona's landscape.
- Mexican wolf cannot be recovered with Arizona as the only participant. Successful recovery can only occur with concurrent recovery efforts in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.
- Because genetic diversity is essential for a biologically sound, sustainable wolf population, the Department will work to optimize genetic diversity in Mexican wolves to the extent possible.
- Because wolf-dog hybridization has been documented in free ranging Mexican wolves and poses a potential threat to the genetic integrity of the Mexican wolf population, wolves must be managed to minimize wolf-dog-hybrid interactions.
- Successful reintroduction and management of Mexican wolves in Arizona is dependent upon wolves being accepted and tolerated by the public in the context of modern Arizona's working landscapes, which provide for multiple public uses.
- The Department's Mexican wolf management activities within Arizona will identify and seek to address appropriate levels of incentives or restitution for stakeholders affected by the project.
- The Department is experienced and uniquely positioned to form partnerships with local communities, stakeholders, and businesses that may be positively or negatively affected by the restoration of Mexican wolves. Mexican wolf restoration must not result in unacceptable impacts to the economic well-being of Arizona's rural communities and the state's hunting opportunities.
- Because in some circumstances wolves may dramatically influence native ungulate populations, the Department will implement management strategies to drive a Mexican wolf management

plan that considers long-term sustainability of both predators and their prey such that current baseline hunting opportunity is maintained in terms of both the quality and quantity of hunting recreation. The Department and the Commission will establish acceptable ungulate loss rates to wolf density ratios to sustain populations of those species, preserve associated hunting opportunity and maintain economic viability for the State of Arizona.

THE AGFC WOLF CONSERVATION PLAN REQUIREMENTS

- The Arizona State Wolf Plan (Plan) will serve as the mechanism for AGFD to continue to represent the interests of the Commission and the State of Arizona in all areas of Mexican wolf conservation including how the efforts in Arizona relate to overall Mexican wolf recovery.
- The Arizona Plan assumes a revised 10(j) rule allowing state management under an approved state management plan supported by appropriate Endangered Species Act Section 4(d) wolf management provisions.
- The Arizona State Wolf Plan can be endorsed by USFWS before record of decision on USFWS Recovery Plan.
- The Arizona State Wolf Plan can achieve formal recognition/certification of ESA compliance by USFWS and Mexican P.A.S.E.

The plan:

- Must be developed through strong public engagement, including suitable outreach with targeted constituents such as livestock producers, sportsmen conservationists, local governments, tribal governments, conservation groups (and the public at large) in deploying adaptive management approaches in managing a sustainable wolf population;
- Must recognize that, to achieve and maintain a range-wide, sustainable population of Mexican wolves managed at levels sufficient to meet population objectives, requires a strong recovery program in Mexico, and;
 - Must clearly articulate the limited potential role of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas contributing to Mexican wolf recovery efforts in the U.S., and emphasize the critical role of Mexico in achieving recovery of Mexican wolf range-wide.
- Must include a research component to ensure that questions are answered with sound science, both biological and sociological, and must incorporate measures of effectiveness and success where applicable. Questions to be clearly addressed include: population census methodology; prey requirements, predator-prey relations, genetic purity, and taxonomic validity;
- Must define where in Arizona Mexican wolf recovery will be supported – such that:
 - Mexican Wolf recovery will only occur within components of its historical range in Arizona determined to be viable by the Commission/Department;
 - Identified areas will require contiguous and suitable habitat that serves to minimize human conflict, and supports a corresponding wolf population distribution as a required condition for any proposed expansion of wolf restoration areas in Arizona;
 - Must be supported by the White Mountain Apache and San Carlos Apache Tribes as participants in Mexican Wolf recovery and acceptable to other affected Tribes such that they will participate in productive planning efforts;
 - Mexican wolf restoration plans must be designed to minimize wolf-domestic dog hybridization potential by limiting wolf occupation of areas in close proximity to known areas of domestic dog concentration.

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- Must include an **enforceable** upper limit on wolf impacts upon game ungulate populations in Arizona such that the current quantity and quality of hunting opportunity in Arizona remains at current levels as a minimum, and include **enforceable** provisions to successfully manage wolf populations to maintain those levels including provision to financially compensate the State of Arizona for exceedances that reduce hunting opportunities below current baseline levels;
- Must include a provision to ensure the manageability for wolves that move outside the 10(j) area;
- Must provide for clear delineation of an **affordable** Interagency Field Team (IFT) structure and function that can be cost effective, be implemented within the 10(j) nonessential/experimental population designation, such that responses to potential depredation incidents in Arizona are initiated within 24 hours of receiving such reports and that initial releases and planned translocations of Mexican wolves in Arizona are vetted with the public;
- Must ensure that wolf conservation efforts are appropriately balanced by on-the-ground interdiction, incentive, and compensation measures that offset impacts to the private sector;
- Appropriately note that the States of Arizona and New Mexico, the White Mountain Apache Tribe, the newly formed, State Resource Council, various local governments and local stakeholders are willing participants, able to use incentives and interdiction measures to manage Mexican wolves, and;
- Will ensure that appropriate private or federal funds are identified, procured and directed to support the wolf reintroduction project that provide incentives to:
 - Productively engage public lands grazing permittees and private lands livestock operators in voluntary, incentives-based Mexican wolf conservation measures;
 - The Mexican Wolf – Livestock Coexistence Council whose interdiction, incentives, and compensation program appropriately addresses the impacts of Mexican wolf reintroduction and recovery on the private sector and creates incentives for enhanced conservation and stewardship;
 - Willing Native American Tribes within the existing experimental population area in Arizona, particularly the White Mountain Apache Tribe, which has demonstrated its substantial commitment to wolf conservation over these past several years.